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ABSTRACT

In order to determine whether Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) had the capacity to produce a TV series of technical quality and whose content meets criteria designed for the selection of children's television programs, two pilot tapes were produced by AEL and submitted for rating to seven early childhood education specialists from seven State Departments of Education and to one specialist affiliated with a national organization. Based on the responses of these eight individuals to a questionnaire dealing with content and technical quality, it appears that AEL has demonstrated the capacity to produce TV tapes which exhibit technical quality and meet content selection criteria. Most of the specialists rated the pilot tapes positively in terms of meeting the selection criteria, providing a variation in character image, exhibiting technical quality; and nearly all thought a series similar to the pilots would be suitable for use in their states. There was concern over the age of the target population, the relative emphasis of children versus adults, and the continuity of the segments. (WDR)

ED 093555

State Department Early Childhood Education Program Specialists' Review of the Content and Technical Quality of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes

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Technical Report No. 30

Research and Evaluation Division
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State Department Early Childhood Education Program Specialists' Review of the Content and Technical Quality of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) is planning a television series for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in Appalachia. The series is to be an integral component of the Home-Oriented Preschool Education (HOPE) program designed to meet the educational needs of the children of this region. However, the capability of AEL to produce a technically sufficient television series was questioned by the National Institute of Education (NIE) during an evaluation conducted by NIE in the Fall of 1972. An NIE specialist panel recommended "that AEL initiate development of the proposed marketable TV series".[1] A master panel then recommended the documentation of AEL's capability to develop the TV component. Dr. Thomas K. Glennan, Director of the NIE, directed AEL to explore and document the capability of development of a TV program, and stated that reviewers had "noted certain problems with respect to the technical quality of your marketable preschool education program".[2]

In accordance with the NIE communications, the purpose of this report is to document State Department of Education representatives' perceptions of AEL's capability to direct the production of a television program of adequate technical quality and whose content meets criteria designed for the selection of children's television programs.

Description of Method

Early childhood education (ECE) curriculum specialists at several State Departments of Education in the Appalachian Region were contacted and were

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[1]Specialist Panel Verification Review, October 9-10, 1972, p. 5, by November 22, 1972, memorandum from Dr. Marc S. Tucker, Task Force on Lab/Center Transition.

[2]By letter dated November 10, 1972.

asked if they would be willing to meet with the early childhood education staff from AEL and discuss the new television series and the other components in the HOPE program. Seven State Department personnel and one person from a national early childhood education organization (ACEI: Association of Childhood Education International) were able to attend meetings held in Washington, D. C., during the middle of May 1973.

During one portion of the discussion meetings, the eight individuals were shown the two pilot tapes produced by AEL and were asked to rate the tapes in terms of their technical quality and also rate the tapes in terms of the degree to which the tapes met eight selected criteria (see Appendix A for the questionnaire). The question relating to technical quality was an adaptation of the categories presented to commercial television personnel[3] and the selected criteria were developed by AEL and validated by a panel consisting of such personnel as Robert 'Captain Kangaroo' Keeshan, Dr. Rose Mukerji, Dr. Martha Rashid, Dr. Herbert Sprigle, and Mr. Eugene Wenger.[4] The eight individuals responding to the questionnaire included ECE personnel from the seven states of Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and from the ACEI (Association of Childhood Education International). Appendix B is a list of personnel.

Results

The first part of the questionnaire (items 1-8) dealt with the degree to

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[3]Shively, Joe E. Commercial television personnel's review of the technical quality and marketability of AEL's "Around the Bend" pilot tapes: Technical Report No. 29. Appalachia Educational Laboratory: Charleston, West Virginia, May 22, 1973. (Draft No. 2)

[4]Bertram, Charles L. Selection of criteria for the Home-Oriented Preschool Education television series and the rating of available children's television programs according to the criteria: Technical Report No. 27. Appalachia Educational Laboratory: Charleston, West Virginia, May 9, 1973. (Draft No. 1)

which the two pilot tapes met the criteria for selection as an ECE program. The ECE specialists were asked to rate each of the eight items in terms of whether the pilot tapes a.) most definitely met, b.) probably met, c.) uncertain, d.) probably didn't meet, e.) definitely did not meet each of the stated criterion. Their responses were then coded in a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 fashion respectively. Table 1 presents the response frequencies and means for each item.

Table 1

Response Frequencies and Means for Criteria for Selection
(n = 8)

		Frequencies					
		Most Definitely (5)	Probably So (4)	Uncertain (3)	Probably Not (2)	Definitely Not (1)	Mean Score
1.	Content is age relevant (3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds)	2	2	4	-	-	3.75
2.	Consistent with accepted objectives for preschool children.	1	5	1	-	-	4.00*
3.	Sequenced according to recognized principles of learning.	2	2	4	-	-	3.75
4.	Balance of cognitive, affective, motor, and social skills learning.	3	4	-	-	-	4.43*
5.	Paced for optimal learning.	1	5	1	-	-	4.00*
6.	Provides a variation in character images.	7	1	-	-	-	4.88
7.	Emphasis on learning rather than entertainment.	5	2	1	-	-	4.50
8.	Can be integrated with group experience and home visitation elements.	3	3	2	-	-	4.13

*One individual did not respond

Table 1 indicates that most of the responses were positive. Six of the eight categories had mean responses at or above the "probably so" (4) alternative and the other two items fell slightly below this level at 3.75. None of the eight respondents felt that the tapes "probably didn't" (2) or "definitely didn't" (1) meet any of the eight selected criteria.

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with the technical quality of the tapes. Item 9, which dealt with the technical quality, included five categories for judging specific technical qualities and one category for judging overall technical quality. The eight ECE personnel were asked to rate each of the six categories in terms of the pilot tapes being a.) excellent quality, b.) above average quality, c.) average quality, d.) below average quality, and e.) unacceptable. Their responses were then coded in a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 fashion respectively. Table 2 presents the response frequencies and means for each category. (Table 2 is on page 5.)

Table 2 indicates that three of the first five categories attained mean scores between excellent (5) and above average (4). These three categories were CHARACTERS AND VOICES (4.38), MUSIC AND SOUND (4.13), and ANIMATION AND PUPPETS (4.00). The other two categories, SETTINGS (3.71) and CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING (3.14) attained mean scores between above average (4) and average quality (3). One individual indicated that MUSIC AND SOUND was below average in quality while another individual felt that CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING was below average in quality. All eight of the responding individuals felt that the OVERALL QUALITY of the tapes was average or above average. In fact, only one individual felt that the OVERALL QUALITY was average while the other seven individuals felt that the OVERALL QUALITY was above average or excellent.

Table 2

Response Frequencies and Means for Technical Quality
for Each Category
(n = 8)

	Frequencies					
	Excellent (5)	Above Average (4)	Average (3)	Below Average (2)	Unacceptable (1)	Mean Score
Characters and Voices	5	1	2	-	-	4.38
Settings	1	3	3	-	-	3.71*
Music and Sound	4	2	1	1	-	4.13
Continuity of Programming	-	2	4	1	-	3.14*
Animation and Puppets	2	4	2	-	-	4.00
Overall Technical Quality	3	4	1	-	-	4.25

*One individual did not respond

The eight ECE personnel also responded to two additional items on the questionnaire (items 10 and 11). The first question was: In your professional opinion, will a series of television tapes produced by AEL be suitable for implementation in your state, assuming that AEL continues to use the same procedures and techniques utilized in the production of the pilot tapes? The alternatives available for answering the question were YES and NO, with additional space for comments. There were four individuals who marked YES and made no comments, three individuals who marked YES but made qualifying comments,

and one individual who marked neither YES nor NO but made a comment. Hence, it appears that all eight individuals were favorably oriented towards the suitability of a similar series of tapes for implementation in their states. The qualifying comments are listed below:

1.) Yes - for 5-year-old children - I still think both tapes are a little "much" for my state's Appalachian Region.

2.) Yes - especially if geared toward 3- and 4-year-olds

3.) Yes - if the content and concepts are focused for young children

4.) ? - with modification. The "local color" is more Southern than Northern.

The second question was: After viewing the pilot tapes, what changes or revisions would you suggest for the television series? Although there were many suggestions for changes or revisions, they were written by only six of the eight individuals as two individuals could offer no suggestions at that time. The comments fell into five main categories: 1.) There were several comments indicating that the scenes emphasized the adult and not the child - the child should be more independent; 2.) The sequencing could be more clearly related and not chopped - "teachable moments" were missed and some segments were too heavily emphasized or inaccurate; 3.) Expansion of concepts, music portions, and poems was recommended; 4.) The pilot tapes were aimed at older children; and 5.) a miscellaneous potpourri concerning pacing, use of upper and lower case letters and words, lack of total body movement, and health issues as concerns for changes or revision.

Summary

In an effort to determine if AEL has the capability of producing a TV series of high technical quality and whose content meets criteria designed for the selection of children's television programs, two pilot tapes were

produced by AEL and then submitted for rating to seven early childhood education specialists from seven State Departments of Education and to one ECE specialist affiliated with a national ECE organization. Based upon the responses of these eight individuals to a questionnaire dealing with content and technical quality, it appears that AEL has been able to demonstrate its capability of producing TV tapes which exhibit technical quality and meet criteria for selection of children's television programs.

Most of the ECE specialists felt that the two pilot tapes probably met the selection criteria. They were quite positive about the tapes providing a variation in character images. Nearly all of the individuals also felt that the tapes exhibited a technical quality which was above average or excellent. Nearly all felt that a series of tapes produced by AEL which would be similar to the two pilot tapes would be suitable for use in their states. Several individuals did indicate, however, that the child should be emphasized more and that sequencing of segments should be more closely related. There was also some concern over the age of the target population for whom the tapes were directed.

Thus, it appears that AEL has produced two pilot tapes of high technical quality and which meet selection criteria appropriate to children's television programs. If AEL is to produce a series of tapes which achieve such high ratings, then the issues and concerns voiced by these early childhood education specialists must be taken into consideration as the new series is developed.

Appendix A

Name _____

Responses of Early Childhood Education Program Specialists
to AEL's Pilot Tapes

We are quite anxious to have your candid reactions to the pilot tapes prepared for our early childhood program. Please rate Items 1-8 by circling the appropriate numbers as indicated in the following scale: 5 - most definitely; 4 - probably so; 3 - uncertain; 2 - questionable (probably not); 1 - definitely not.

		Most Definitely	Probably So	Uncertain	Probably Not	Definitely Not
1.	Content is age relevant (3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds).	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Consistent with accepted objectives for preschool children.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Sequenced according to recognized principles of learning.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Balance of cognitive, affective, motor, and social skills learning.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Paced for optimal learning.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Provides a variation in character images.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Emphasis on learning rather than entertainment.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Can be integrated with group experience and home visitation elements.	5	4	3	2	1

9. Rate Item 9 according to the following scale: 5 - excellent quality; 4 - above average quality; 3 - average quality; 2 - below average quality; 1 - unacceptable quality.

	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
a. Characters and Voices	5	4	3	2	1
b. Settings	5	4	3	2	1
c. Music and Sound	5	4	3	2	1
d. Continuity of Programming	5	4	3	2	1
e. Animation and Puppets	5	4	3	2	1
f. Overall Technical Quality	5	4	3	2	1

10. In your professional opinion, will a series of television tapes produced by AEL be suitable for implementation in your state, assuming that AEL continues to use the same procedures and techniques utilized in the production of the pilot tapes? Yes ___ No ___ Comments _____

_____

11. After viewing the pilot tapes, what changes or revisions would you suggest for the television series? _____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

State Department of Education Early Childhood Education Personnel
Who Participated in the Assessment of the Pilot Tapes

Name	State/Affiliation
John Cannon	Tennessee
Charlotte G[illegible]n	Pennsylvania
Neith Headley	Association of Childhood* Education International
Louise Higgins	Alabama
Grey Ritchie	Virginia
Lanore Sogard	West Virginia
Eugene Wenger	Ohio
Patrick West	Kentucky

*Ms. Headley does not represent any state.